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Statement  
of  
Mr. James E. Webb  
Administrator  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
before the  
Committee on Science and Astronautics  
House of Representatives  
July 13, 1961

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

The actions that have been taken by NASA since January 1961 in relation to research and development in the field of communication satellites have all been for the purpose of accelerating the achievement of a practical operational and commercially viable communication satellite system as soon as possible.

On January 4, 1961, the previous Administration published a call for competitive proposals for the development of an experimental satellite design and prototype capable of testing in the space environment, the life of various components, and providing data needed to design a feasible communication satellite system.

In February, NASA entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Federal Communications Commission, which

provided a basis for close working relationship between the two agencies. By virtue of these relationships each agency is able to develop its policies and to implement them with full knowledge of the other's interests and requirements.

We, in NASA, look to the FCC to take proper action on the problems of organizing the resources of private industry in such a manner as to meet Governmental requirements and conform to public policy. On the other hand, we, in NASA, have the job of developing the space technology which any private organization authorized by the FCC will be able to utilize to provide communication services to the public.

Also in February, NASA completed negotiations for technical arrangements whereby the communications organizations in England and France will provide ground stations for experimental purposes in connection with Project Relay and other projects in the future. Those technical arrangements were made with the full knowledge of the Department of State and subsequently an exchange of notes on a Government-to-Government basis was made to cover the experimental cooperation with those countries.

It is significant, I think, that from the very beginning the United States has dealt with foreign countries interested in communication satellites on a cooperative basis. We have

sought to make arrangements which provide interested countries the greatest possible opportunity for participation in experimentation. This should pave the way for further cooperative agreements that may be necessary, particularly when operational systems become technically and economically feasible.

Another activity which has been carried on in recent months has considerable significance for communication satellites. NASA has been participating in the work of the International Radio Consultative Committee (the CCIR), which is a branch of the International Telecommunications Union (the ITU), established for the purpose of studying and making recommendations on technical radio questions and operating procedures. NASA has also been participating with other agencies of our Government in the formulation of a United States position with respect to the international allocation of radio frequencies. The work of the Interdepartmental Radio Advisory Committee (IRAC), which includes NASA, has resulted in a major step toward a United States position which will provide a sound contribution to international agreement in this important area. Our efforts have been directed not only toward the farsighted allocation of bands for use by commercial and governmental agencies all over the world to provide a variety of communications services using satellite relays,

but also toward obtaining the necessary international agreements in support of the use of certain radio frequencies for other space exploration purposes.

As you are aware, it is expected that there will be an international conference under the auspices of the ITU in the fall of 1963. The ITU is a part of the United Nations organization and as such, in our view, will play a most constructive role in achieving international agreements to support the use of a universal but limited resource of nature--namely, the radio frequency spectrum. Although the work of IRAC and the CCIR has not been completed, major first steps have been taken.

In April and May of this year, the seven proposals submitted in response to NASA's January 4th call were evaluated, and the Radio Corporation of America was selected as contractor for Project Relay. In addition, negotiations are underway at the present time with the American Telephone and Telegraph Company to enter into a cooperative agreement whereby additional experimental satellites may be launched next year at AT&T's expense. This arrangement will add to the total program of experimentation and to the development of cooperative relationships between Government and industry which are essential if the total national effort is to be maximized and an operational satellite system achieved at

the earliest possible time.

The resources and many years of experience of our international communications carriers are a national asset of great value. The scientific and technical ingenuity of our electronics and aerospace industries have much to contribute. As a matter of policy, private initiative and resources, as well as Governmental, are being applied to the job.

On June 15, 1961, in a letter to the Vice President, President Kennedy requested the National Aeronautics and Space Council to make the necessary studies and Government-wide policy recommendations for bringing into optimum use at the earliest practicable time operational communication satellites.

In line with this, NASA is participating in the work of the Space Council, and in the important field of research and development, is working closely with the Department of Defense so that the research and development activities of both agencies continue to be closely coordinated. It is worth noting that research and development for either commercial or for military requirements is likely to benefit the other.

In the very near future it is likely that the Space Council will make its recommendations to the President and that he will lay down any additional policy guidelines

which he regards as necessary. In the meantime, every phase of the work that will contribute to an early operational capability is proceeding.

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